

**PYRALID MOTHS IN PROFILE: PART 4 –
SALEBRIOPSIS ALBICILLA (HERRICH-SCHÄFFER)**

BERNARD SKINNER

5 Rawlins Close, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8JS.

Distribution and past history

THE DISCOVERY of the Scarce Hook-tip *Sabra harpagula* Esp. in 1961 in the Wye Valley, Monmouthshire (Anon, 1962) led to a further investigation of this apparently underworked area of small-leaved Lime *Tilia cordata* rich woodland. The following year saw the first British record of Fletcher's Pug *Eupithecia egenaria* H.-S. (Mere, 1962) and in 1964 single specimens of *Salebriopsis albicilla*, the third new species associated with small-leaved Lime, was taken independently by Messrs Mere and Newton (Mere, 1965; Newton, 1965).

Investigation in similar woodland on the Gloucestershire side of the Wye yielded both *harpagual* and *egenaria*, but failed to reveal the presence of the pyralid. The species is listed in the *Microlepidoptera of Gloucestershire* (Newton, 1985), but the records mentioned would appear to refer to Monmouthshire. It was not until a British Entomological and Natural History Society field meeting to Welshbury Wood, near Cinderford on 25.vi.1994, that *albicilla* was officially reported as new to Gloucestershire (Waring, 1996a).

Elsewhere it has been reported from Leigh Woods, Avon Gorge, North Somerset in June 1968 (Chappel, 1969) and June and July 1995 (Waring, 1996b).

Life history

There is no shortage of female specimens in collections, however no attempt appears to have been made to rear this species in Britain. The larva has not been found in the wild and so remains undescribed or figured in the British literature.

A female taken in Gloucestershire in June 1994 was held captive in a netting-covered small plastic box containing leaves of small-leaved Lime. The eggs which were pale yellow flecked with crimson were laid singly on the netting and randomly on the surface of the leaves, but never around the edges. They hatched from six to seven days. Throughout its life the larva lives under a flimsy silk web, skeletonising the surface of the leaves when young and eating out large windows when more mature. Several leaves became spun together, but this was possibly the result of several leaves and larvae in close proximity and not necessarily an indication of their habits in the wild. They were not obviously gregarious, but at the same time showed no aggression when inadvertently encountering one another.

The larval period lasted approximately fifteen days. The full-grown larva (Plate B, Fig.4) measured 12mm long, and was yellowish-green with several longitudinal lines, these and the segmental folds being of a darker green

colour. The head is pale yellowish-brown, flecked with darker brown and with flesh-coloured mouth parts. The larvae were provided with several centimetres of a vermiculite and peat mixture from which they constructed oval and silk-lined cocoons (Plate B, Fig. 5) at or just below the surface.

The pupa (Plate B, Fig. 6) measured 9mm in length, and was shiny and medium brown in colour with green wing cases. A few of the pupae were gently forced and emerged in early spring, the rest were kept in an outside shed and emerged during the latter half of June.

References

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BOOK REVIEW

The Conservation of Butterflies in Britain, past and present by John Feltwell. A5 paperback, 242 pages with 17 black and white illustrations. ISBN: 0 907970 02 8. Wildlife Matters, Battle. £6.99 plus £1.95 UK p&p from Wildlife Matters, Marlham, Henley's Down, Battle, East Sussex TN33 9BN.

This is a companion book to the excellent *Natural History of Butterflies* by the same author (published in 1986). *The Conservation of Butterflies in Britain* is fully referenced and bang up-to-date, even including mention of the trial of two dealers selling wild-caught Chequered Skippers. It includes chapters on the history of butterfly conservation in Britain, why conserve butterflies?, flagship species, habitat management, threats, butterflies and the law, voluntary codes and nature reserves. Because of the pressures on the countryside in Britain, Feltwell stresses that it is vital to maintain habitats in good condition, whereas in countries with more space and less people natural succession can be allowed to take place as there will always be different areas becoming suitable for those butterflies which live in early successional habitats such as coppiced woodland; according to Feltwell, one fifth of British butterflies occur in these warm, early successional habitats. The chapter on early conservation in Britain is especially interesting, showing the key role that Lepidoptera played in early conservation attempts;